

We have all seen and heard them. On T.V., radio and maybe in person. The evangelist delivers a powerful message dealing with sin and judgment.

At the close of the sermon he tells his audience they need to pray the *sinner's prayer*. He usually says something like the following. "By a simple prayer of faith you can invite Christ into your life now. Just say, thank you Lord, come into my heart."---Billy Graham

Is this what Peter, Paul and other first century preachers told people to do to be saved?

Acts is the N.T. history book about the early church. There are nine examples of conversion given us in this book. Please take an excursion with us as we review what these people did in order to be saved from their sins.

FIRST EXAMPLE

It is the day of Pentecost and it is in the city of Jerusalem. Seven weeks after the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Peter is the preacher. **Acts Chapter two** records this powerful sermon. At it's conclusion it is evident Peter had convicted them of their sins. We are told; *"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."* (Acts 2:37, 38).

We learn that about three thousand responded to his command. Yet Peter did not say anything about saying a little prayer, inviting the Lord Jesus to come into their hearts. He did say *"repent and be baptized."*

SECOND EXAMPLE

In **Acts 8:5-12** we read of a number of people living in the city of Samaria becoming Christians. Philip was the evangelist. It is said, *"They all gave heed, from the least to the greatest."* We are further told, *"But when they believed Philip preaching the things Concerning the kingdom of God, and the baptized."*

Nothing is said about their saying the sinner's prayer.

THIRD EXAMPLE

In **Chapter 8:26-39** we are told that an angel of the Lord instructed Philip, a preacher, to go down to the road that led from Jerusalem to Gaza.

This resulted in Philip meeting an Ethiopian eunuch riding in a chariot. The eunuch is reading from what is the **53 chapter of Isaiah** but did not understand what Isaiah was saying. Philip began to "*preach unto him Jesus*" since this chapter is a prophecy concerning the death of Jesus.

Then we are told, *"And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?' And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him"*(vs. 36-38).

Four things happened in this conversion. **First**, Philip preached the word of God to the eunuch. **Second**, the eunuch believed what Philip had preached. **Third**, He confessed Jesus as the Son of God. **Fourth**, Philip must have touched on baptism for seeing water the eunuch wanted to know why he should not be baptized. The chariot was stopped and Philip baptized him.

Notice, Philip did not tell the eunuch to just pray a little prayer - "**Lord Jesus, come into my heart.**" Much effort could have been saved if all that was necessary was the "sinner's prayer."

FOURTH EXAMPLE

The next example of conversion is in **Chapter nine**. It is Saul of Tarsus, later known as Paul. *"And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem"*(Acts 9:1, 2).

Paul begins his journey to Damascus to find Christians and bring them captives to Jerusalem. But the Lord had other plans for Paul. Just outside the city something happens to him which would change his whole life.

Luke records, *"And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord what wilt thou have me to do?"* (v. 3-6).

Paul is told to go into the city and there he will be told what to do. Blinded, Paul was so in shock that he did not eat or drink for three days. Ananias was sent to him. He found Paul on his knees praying.

The first thing Ananias did was to get him off his knees. Ananias said, *"And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22: 16).

Notice three things. First, Paul heard the Lord speak, He became convinced he had been wrong in persecuting Christians. Second, he became penitent as demonstrated by his not eating and drinking. Third, he was baptized.

FIFTH EXAMPLE

The next example is the conversion of a Gentile. This is found in Acts 10. Peter had to have a demonstration from the Holy Spirit to show him God wanted Gentiles to be saved as much as the Jews. Peter finds himself in the house of Cornelius, *"A devout man, and one believed and their faith led them to be baptized (verse 48).*

Again no sinners' prayer.

SIXTH EXAMPLE

In chapter 16 we find Paul in Philippi where he comes into contact with a woman named Lydia. *"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there, And she constrained us."*

Here Lydia and those in her household heard the Word preached by Paul. They believed and were baptized. No prayer saying, "Lord Jesus come into my heart."

SEVENTH EXAMPLE

Later on in this same city Paul and Silas find themselves in prison. It was midnight and they were praying and singing. Suddenly an earthquake jarred the doors of the prison open. The jailer was about to kill himself realizing he would be held responsible for the escape of the prisoners. Paul cries out to him that everyone is still there.

The jailer was so over-come he cried out and said, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and To all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized he and all his, straightway"* (Acts 16:31-33).

Again we see repeated what we have already observed in every case of conversion. He and his household believed, repented and were baptized. No sinners' prayer is said by anyone in that house.

EIGHTH EXAMPLE

In *Acts 18:8* we learn that *"Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized."*

Again no little prayer was said by anyone.

NINTH EXAMPLE

Paul re-baptized twelve men who had been baptized under John's baptism which was no longer valid at that time. He insisted they be baptized *"In the name of the Lord Jesus."*

Was baptism important to Paul?

It was so important that he insisted these twelve men be baptized correctly. (See *Acts 19:1-10.*)

In these nine examples we see the same pattern repeated each time. In every case their faith produced obedience to the command of baptism, for the remission of their sins, and not a prayer asking the *"Lord Jesus to come into my heart."* The so called "sinners' prayer" is no where to be found in the N.T. It is an invention of men, certainly not authorized by the Lord.

WHEN CHRISTIANS SIN

When Christians sin, and they will, they follow the instructions of the apostle John. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (See 1 John 1:9 and also James 5:16.)

These were specific instructions given to Christians not to non-Christians. For the Christian, praying for his or her forgiveness is appropriate and scriptural.